

The Old Paths

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." -Jeremiah 6:16

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Devotion: The Heart of Prayer

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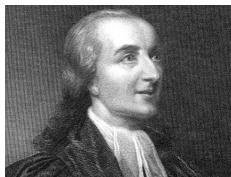
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Devotion: The Heart of Prayer



Devotion is the particular frame of mind found in one entirely devoted to God. It is the spirit of reverence, of awe, of godly fear. It is a state of heart which appears before God in prayer and worship. It is foreign to everything like lightness of spirit, and is opposed to levity and noise and bluster. Devotion dwells in the realm of quietness and is still before God. It is serious, thoughtful, meditative. Devotion belongs to the inner life and lives in the closet, but also appears in the public services of the sanctuary. It is a part of the very spirit of true worship and is of the nature of the spirit of prayer.

Devotion belongs to the devout man, whose

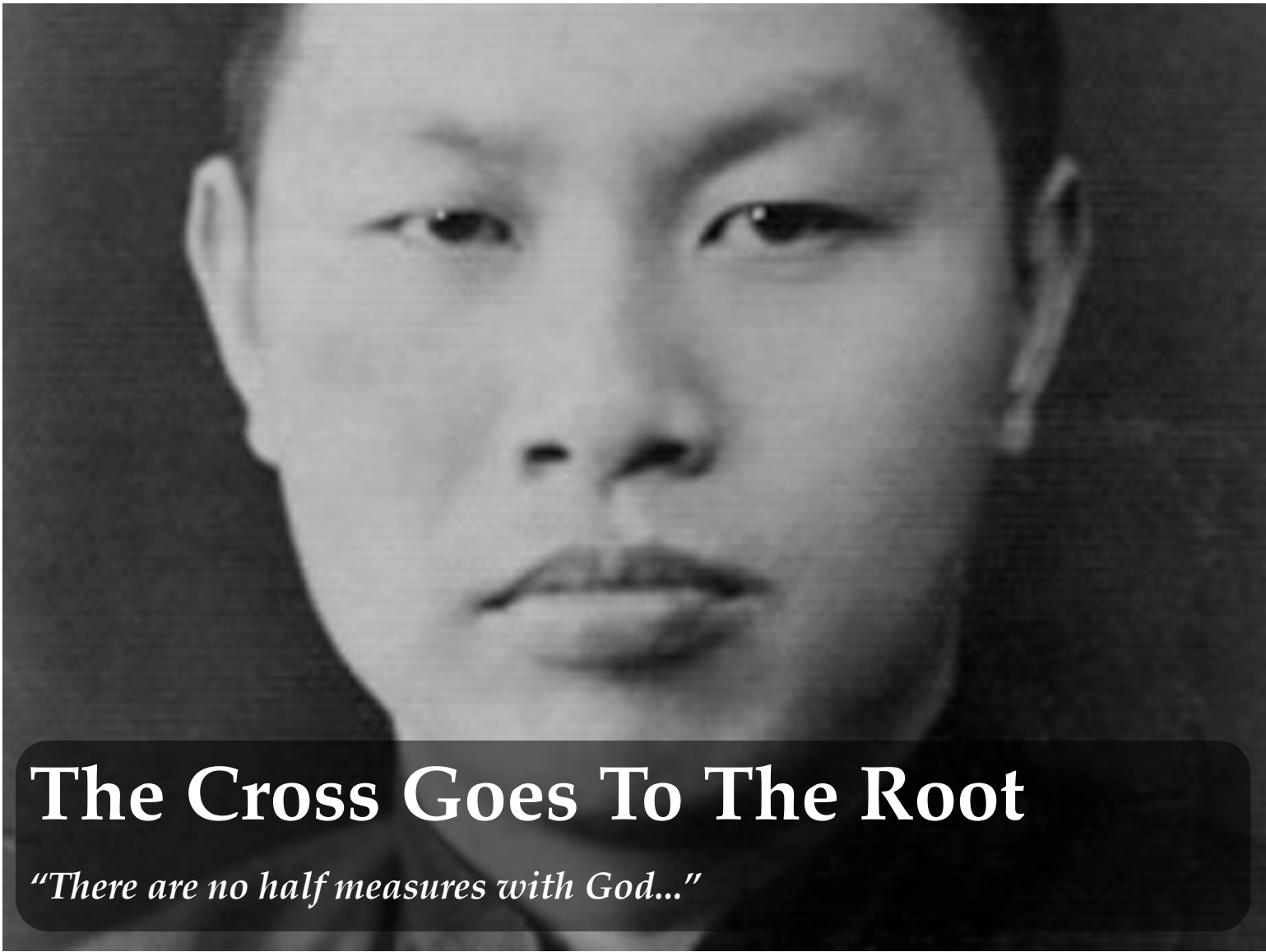
thoughts and feelings are devoted to God. Such a man has a mind given up wholly to the Christian life and possesses a strong affection for God and an ardent love for his house. Cornelius was "a devout man, one that feared God with all His house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed always." "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial." "One Ananias, a devout man, according to the law," was sent unto Saul when he was blind, to tell him what the Lord would have him do. God can wonderfully use such men, for devout men are His chosen agents in carrying forward His plans.

The very essence of prayer is the spirit of devotion. Without devotion prayer is an empty form, a vain round of words. Sad to say, much of this kind of prayer prevails, today, in the church. This is a busy age, bustling and active, and this bustling spirit has invaded the church of God. Its religious performances are many. The church works at religion with the order, precision and force of real machinery. But too often it works with the heartlessness of the machine. There is much of the treadmill movement in our ceaseless round and routine of religious doings. We pray without praying. We sing without singing with the Spirit. We have music without the praise of God being in it. We go to church by habit, and come home all too gladly when the benediction is pronounced. We read our accustomed chapter in the Bible, and feel quite relieved when the task is done. We say our prayers by rote, as a schoolboy recites his lesson, and are not sorry when the Amen is uttered. Christianity has to do with everything but our hearts. It engages our

hands and feet; it takes hold of our voices; it lays its hands on our money; it affects even the postures of our bodies, but it does not take hold of our affections, our desires, our zeal, and make us serious, desperately in earnest, and cause us to be quiet and worshipful in the presence of God.

Why all these sad defects in our piety? Why this modern perversion of the true nature of the religion of Jesus Christ? Why is the modern type of Christianity so much like a jewel-case with the precious jewels gone? The great lack of the modern Church is the spirit of devotion

E.M. Bounds (1835-1913) E. M. Bounds was a man hidden away by God and with God in prayer. During his lifetime he never attracted a large following or gained the success and reputation that one might expect. After forty-six years of faithful ministry he still was virtually unknown. Out of the eight classics on prayer he wrote, only two were published during his lifetime. Though hidden and unrecognized while alive, E.M. Bounds is now considered by most evangelicals as the most prolific and fervent author on the subject of prayer. Rightly named by some as an apostle of prayer.



The Cross Goes To The Root

"There are no half measures with God..."

Let me remind you again of the fundamental nature of that which the Lord has done on the Cross. I feel I cannot press this point too much for we must see it. Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that the government of your country should wish to deal drastically with the question of strong drink and should decide that the whole country was to go 'dry', how could the decision be carried into effect? How could we help? If we were to search every shop and house throughout the land and smash all the bottles of wine or beer or brandy we came across, would that meet the case? Surely not.

We might thereby rid the land of every drop of alcoholic liquor it contains, but behind those bottles of strong drink are the factories that produce them, and if we only deal with the bottles and leave the factories untouched, production will still continue and there is no permanent solution of the problem. The drink-producing factories, the breweries and distilleries throughout the land, must be closed down if the drink question is to be permanently settled.

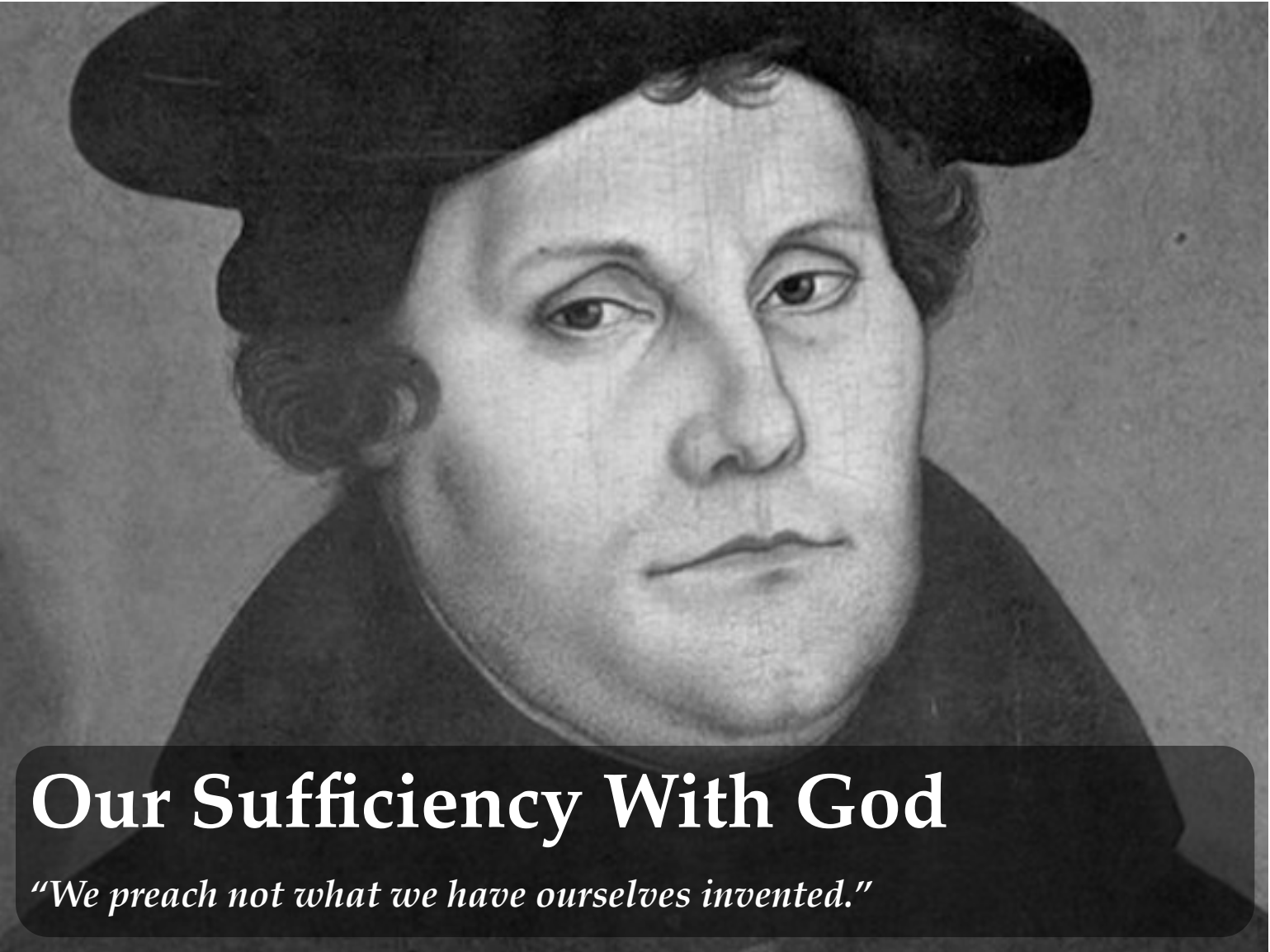
We are the factory; our actions are the products. The Blood of the Lord Jesus dealt with the question of the products, namely, our sins. So the question of what we have done is settled, but would God have stopped there? What about the question of what we are? Our sins were produced by us. They have been dealt with, but how are we going to be dealt with? Do you believe the Lord would cleanse away all our sins and then leave us to get rid of the sin-producing factory? Do you believe He would put away the goods produced but leave us to deal with the source of production?

To ask this question is but to answer it. Of course He has not done half the work and left the other half undone. No, He has done away with the goods and also made a clean sweep of the factory that produces the goods.

The finished work of Christ really has gone to the root of our problem and dealt with it. There are no half measures with God. "Knowing this," says Paul, "That our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should

no longer be in bondage to sin" (Rom. 6:6). "Knowing this"! Yes, but do you know it? "Or are ye ignorant?" (Rom. 6:3). May the Lord graciously open our eyes.

Watchman Nee (1903-1972). Watchman Nee became a Christian in mainland China in 1920 at the age of seventeen and began writing in the same year. Throughout the nearly thirty years of his ministry, Watchman Nee was clearly manifested as a unique gift from the Lord to His Body for His move in this age. In 1952 he was imprisoned for his faith; he remained in prison until his death in 1972. His words remain an abundant source of spiritual revelation and supply to Christians throughout the world. Especially towards the topic of deeper Christian life and revelation in Christ.



Our Sufficiency With God

"We preach not what we have ourselves invented."

"And such confidence have we through Christ to Godward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant. (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)"

These words are blows and thrusts for the false apostles and preachers. Paul is mortal enemy to the blockheads who make great boast, pretending to what they do not possess and to what they cannot do; who boast of having the Spirit in great measure; who are ready to counsel and aid the whole world; who pride themselves on the ability to invent something new. It is to be a surpassingly precious and heavenly thing they are to spin out of their heads, as the dreams of pope and monks have been in time past.

"We do not so," says Paul. "We rely not upon ourselves or our wisdom and ability. We preach not what we have ourselves invented. But this is our boast and trust in Christ before God, that we have made of you a divine epistle; have written upon your hearts, not our thoughts, but the Word of God."

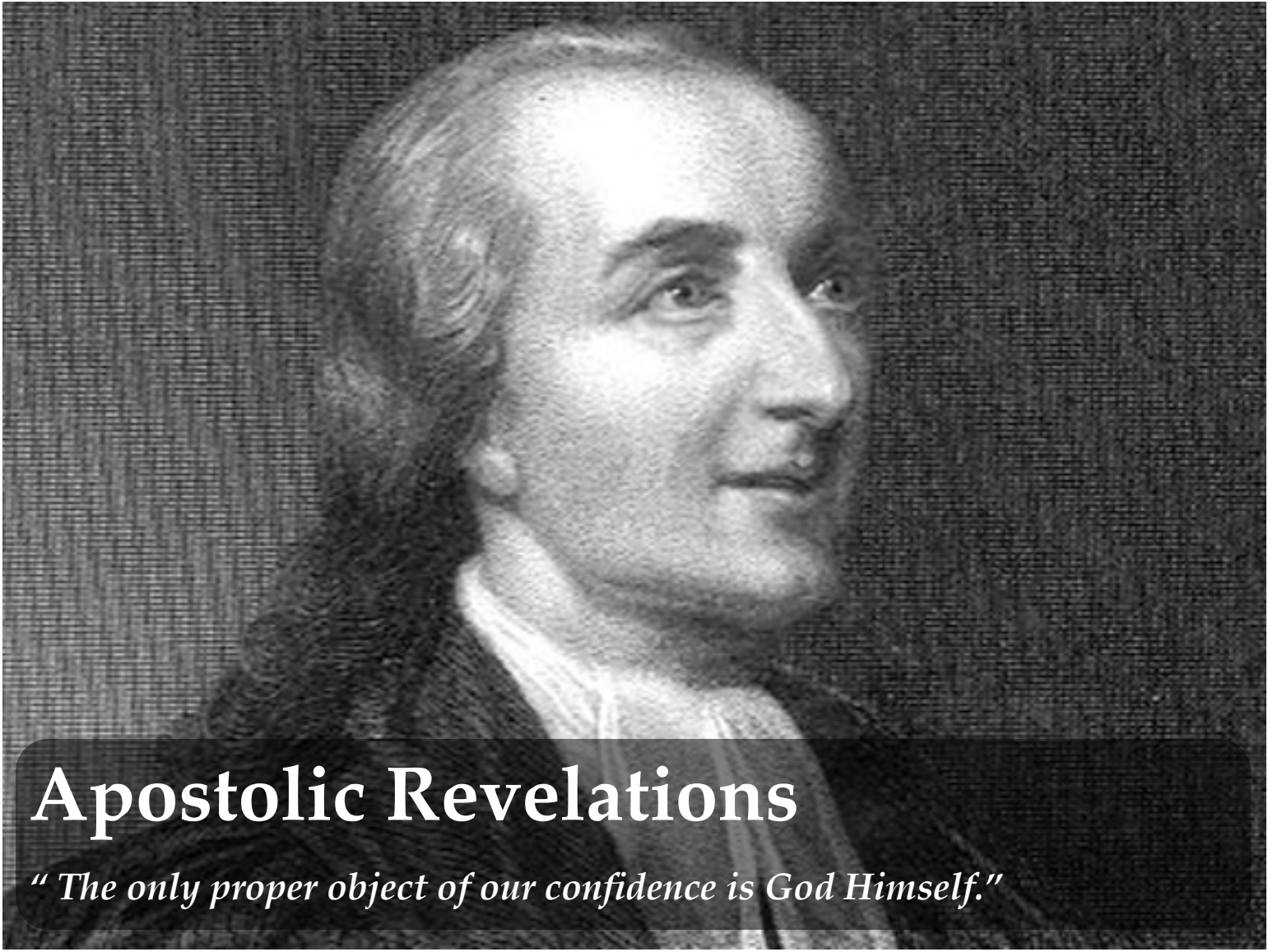
We are not, however, glorifying our own power, but the works and the power of him who has called and equipped us for such an office.

He who would teach and exercise authority in the Church without this glory, "it is profitable for him," as Christ says (Mt. 18:6), "that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depths of the sea." For the devil's lies he preaches, and death is what he effects. Our Papists, in time past, after much and long-continued teaching, after many inventions and works whereby they hoped to be saved, nevertheless always doubted in heart and mind whether or no they had pleased God. The teaching and works of all heretics and seditious spirits certainly do not bespeak for them trust in Christ; their own glory is the object of their teaching, and the homage and praise of the people is the goal of their desire.

The meaning here is; When the glory and holiness of Christ, revealed through the preaching of the Gospel, is rightly perceived then the glory of the Law--which is but a feeble and transitory glory--is

seen to be not really glorious. It is mere dark clouds in contrast to the light of Christ shining to lead us out of sin, death and hell unto God and eternal life.

Martin Luther (1483-1547). Luther being famous as the reformer of Christianity is a very misunderstood saint in the lineage of God's people. He was continually caught between defenders of orthodox Catholicism on the one side and even more radical reformers on the other. Luther's heart was to see Christianity in its apostolic form restored to the church overall. He left many writings and a translation of the bible with commentary. Surely in his day he was on the devils list, and the devil did accountably confront him at times and he would flee to the fortress of our Christ.



Apostolic Revelations

“The only proper object of our confidence is God Himself.”

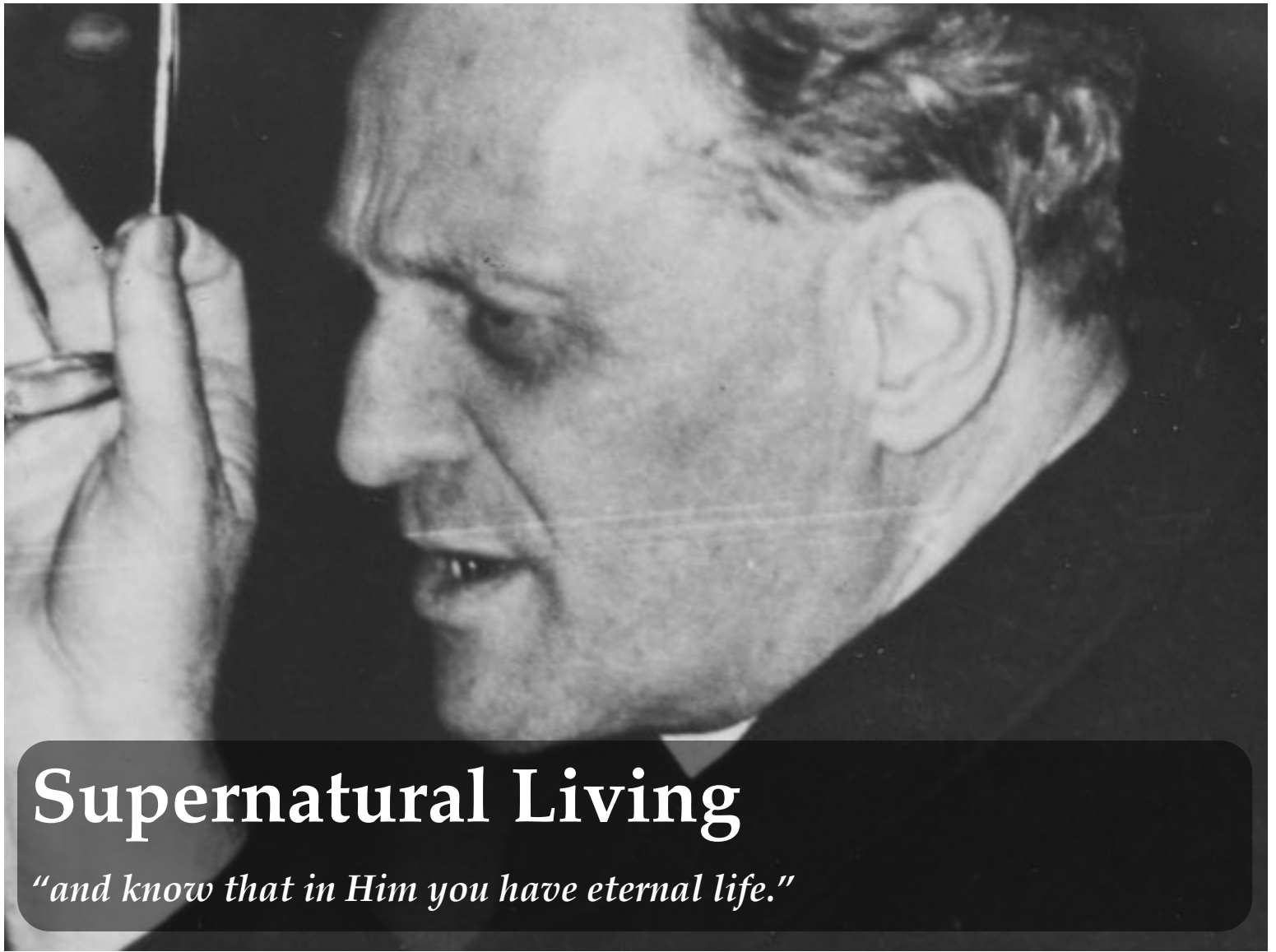
Peter, James, and John, were-it seems-the foremost of the Apostles in spiritual strength and boldness; nevertheless, the manifestation which they had of Christ on the mount of transfiguration almost overwhelmed them. Their bodies sank under the weight of glory, and when they came out of their sleep (or trance) they could not recover themselves; they knew not what they said. This had happened previously to Daniel, and later to John the beloved Apostle, who, when he saw his Saviour with some additional beams of glory, fell at His feet as though dead. Paul not only lost his sight on such an occasion, but was near to losing his life-being unable to take any refreshment for three days and three nights. It is also generally supposed that Moses actually died under the overpowering displays of the Redeemer's love. Hence, we learn that God's way and time are best, and that we are to leave both to His gracious wisdom; He using the means by which He has promised to manifest Himself to those who diligently seek Him.

If you desire to know the Lord in a more intimate way, you will need to use what means are available to you. The Father reveals His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ shows Himself, and the Holy Spirit freely testifies of Him. Nevertheless, the Scriptures in general attribute the wonder of divine manifestations to the blessed Spirit. No man can, experimentally, say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. It is His peculiar office to convince the world of righteousness, by enabling us to know the Lord our Righteousness in a saving way. 'He shall glorify me' said Christ 'for He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you'; and this He does, without any merit of ours, by the means which God has appointed, and which He enables us to use aright.

The means are both outward and inward; the outward are what the Church calls 'The Means of Grace' which are: particularly hearing or reading God's Word, partaking of the sacraments, and praying together with one accord for the manifestation of the Spirit as the early Christians did. These

means are to be used with the greatest diligence, but not to be altogether trusted; the only proper object of our confidence is God Himself, who works all in all.

John Fletcher (1729-1785). In the words of John Wesley about Fletcher: "Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years, but one equal to him I have not known—one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblameable a character in every respect I have found either in Europe or America, and I scarce expect to find another such on this side of eternity. I never saw Fletcher's equal. On him great grace was bestowed. What deadness to the world! What zeal for souls! What communion with God! What intercourse with Heaven!



Supernatural Living

"and know that in Him you have eternal life."

I am sorry I would have liked to paint the beautiful shining faces of Christians in Communist jail. Their faces shone, and it was quite an achievement for the glory of God to shine on the face of a Christian in Communist jails. We did not wash (I had not washed in three years), but the glory of God can shine even from behind a crust of dirt. They had triumphant smiles on their faces.

I know about Christians who were released from Communist prisons. I was one who was stopped several times on the street by passersby asking, "Sir, what is it in you? You look like such a happy man. What is the source of your happiness?" I told them that I came from many years in Communist jails. They could not understand this because they could not think beyond the difficulties of their own lives. They had not learned to walk in the Spirit and to experience the presence of God. So many would think, "If only you knew what a life I have - a husband who batters me, a wife who nags, children who break my heart - there are so many things."

There are many material difficulties, tempests in your soul. I know these difficulties exist.

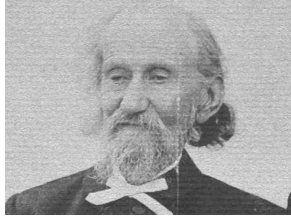
We all expect that Jesus will come again and rapture us to heaven. No one will be raptured, I can assure you, if Christ hasn't raptured his heart already. No one will be in heaven if he is not in heaven already, if he does not live here in an entirely different world than the material world that surrounds us. Live the new life, the eternal life, the timeless life, to which we are called by Jesus. We were in prison cells with believers sentenced to death. As often as the door was unlocked, the prisoner did not know if he would be taken to a bath, to an interrogation or to be shot. Yet there was such a peace.

I belong to the family of God. I have the nature of God. Because I also have the nature of a man, I know I may live sixty or eighty years. Since I have the nature of God, who in the world can kill me? Men can change only my outward form, but I will live in other circumstances. We saw this peace - the peace of those who understood that godly nature - and I plead with you for this. You have your diffi-

culties. You have your crosses. Trust in the God who makes faces to shine and know that in Him you have eternal life.

Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001). Wurmbrand is an evangelical minister who spent fourteen years in Communist imprisonment and torture in his homeland of Romania. He is one of Romania's most widely known Jewish Believer leaders, authors, and educators. He suffered in unspeakable ways in the prison camps but at those times had revelations of Jesus Christ to his heart. He brought the message of the persecuted church to the world especially the peaceful western world where christian persecution is thought of as a thing of the past. May we all enter into Christ's sufferings as this saint did.

Andrew Murray



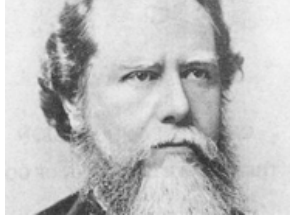
"There is need of a great revival of spiritual life, of truly fervent devotion to our Lord Jesus, of entire consecration to His service. It is only in a church in which this spirit of revival has at least begun, that there is any hope of radical change in the relation of the majority of our Christian people to mission work."

"Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, 'above all that we ask or think'. Each time, before you Intercede, be quiet first, and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, and how He delights to hear the prayers of His redeemed people. Think of your place and privilege in Christ, and expect great things!"

"Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue. God's voice in response to mine is its most essential part."

"Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."

Hudson Taylor



"Perhaps if there were more of that intense distress for souls that leads to tears, we should more frequently see the results we desire. Sometimes it may be that while we are complaining of the hardness of the hearts of those we are seeking to benefit, the hardness of our own hearts and our feeble apprehension of the solemn reality of eternal things may be the true cause of our want of success."

"The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus."

"Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power."

"You must GO forward on your knees."

"All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they believed that God would be with them."

Andrew Bonar

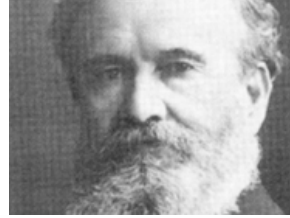


"Revivals begin with God's own people; the Holy Spirit touches their heart anew, and gives them new fervor and compassion, and zeal, new light and life, and when He has thus come to you, He next goes forth to the valley of dry bones...Oh, what responsibility this lays on the Church of God! If you grieve Him away from yourselves, or hinder His visit, then the poor perishing world suffers sorely!"

"Why is there so little forethought in the laying out of time and employment, so as secure a large portion of each day for prayer? Why is there so much speaking, yet so little prayer? Why is there so much running to and fro to meetings, conventions, fellowship gatherings and yet so little time for prayer? Brethren, why so many meetings with our fellow men and so few meetings with God?"

"We have not been men of prayer. The spirit of prayer has slumbered among us. The closet has been too little frequented and delighted in. We have allowed business, study or active labor to interfere with our closet-hours. And the feverish atmosphere in which both the church and the nation are enveloped has found its way into our prayer closets..."

A.B. Simpson



"The chief danger of the Church today is that it is trying to get on the same side as the world, instead of turning the world upside down. Our Master expects us to accomplish results, even if they bring opposition and conflict. Anything is better than compromise, apathy, and paralysis. God give to us an intense cry for the old-time power of the Gospel and the Holy Ghost!"

"One of the special marks of the Holy Ghost in the Apostolic Church was the spirit of boldness. One of the most essential qualities of faith that is to attempt great things for God and expect great things from God, is holy audacity. Where we are dealing with a supernatural Being, and taking from Him things that are humanly impossible, it is easier to take much than little; it is easier to stand in a place of audacious trust than in a place of cautious, timid clinging to the shore. Likewise, seamen in the life of faith, let us launch out into the deep, and find that all things are possible with God, and all things are possible unto him that believeth."

Sadhu Sunder Singh



"On the mountains, torrents flow right along, cutting their own courses. But on the plains canals have to be dug out painfully by men so that the water might flow. So among those who live on the heights with God, the Holy Spirit makes its way through of its own accord, whereas those who devote little time to prayer and communion with God have to organize painfully."

"Some people become tired at the end of ten minutes or half an hour of prayer. What will they do when they have to spend Eternity in the presence of God? We must begin the habit here and become used to being with God."

The essence of prayer does not consist in asking God for something but in opening our hearts to God, in speaking with Him, and living with Him in perpetual communion. Prayer is continual abandonment to God. Prayer does not mean asking God for all kinds of things we want; it is rather the desire for God Himself, the only Giver of Life, Prayer is not asking, but union with God. Prayer is not a painful effort to gain from God help in the varying needs of our lives. Prayer is the desire to possess God Himself."

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